

American Battle Monuments Commission

Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial

LOCATION

The Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial is situated 4 miles (6.5 kilometers) southeast of Epinal, Vosges, France, on Road D-157, in the village of Dinoze-Queuement. It can be reached by automobile from Paris, 231 miles (372 kilometers), in about five hour via toll AutoRoute A-4, eastward to the Nancy exit, then onto Highway N-57. Approaching Epinal, from Nancy, avoid the city of Epinal by staying on N-57 toward Remiremont-Mulhouse, existing at Arches-Dinoze.

Rail service is available from Gare de l'Est station in Paris via Nancy, where it may be necessary to change trains. The journey by train also requires about 5 hours.

Air travel service is available from Paris to the Epinal-Mirecourt Airport. The journey takes about 45 minutes. Adequate hotel accommodations and taxi service can be found in Epinal and vicinity.

HOURS

The cemetery is open daily to the public as follows:

SUMMER: 16 April – 30 September

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. – weekdays

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. – Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays

WINTER: 1 October – 15 April

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – weekdays

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays

When the cemetery is open to the public, a staff member is on duty in the Visitors' Building to answer questions and to escort relatives to grave and memorialization sites.

HISTORY

On 15 August 1944, just a little over two months after the landings in Normandy, Allied Forces launched an amphibious assault to free southern France. Air bombardment in preparation for the landings began in July and grew steadily in intensity. Preceded by Allied assault groups and U.S. airborne and glider troops, under cover of heavy naval and aerial bombardment, the 3rd, 36th and 45th Divisions of the U.S. VI Corps landed on the beaches in southern France from Cape Cavalaire to Agay and thrust rapidly inland. As

advancing VI Corps troops of the U.S. Seventh Army pursued the enemy, French units landed and moved westward toward Toulon and Marseilles. within two weeks both ports had been liberated and U.S. forces had advanced northward up the Rhone Valley to seize Montelimar, cutting off large numbers of the retreating enemy.

In less than one month, U.S. troops from southern France had advanced 400 miles and made contact with those from Normandy on 11 September 1944 at Sombernon, west of Dijon. Ten days later, when these forces had joined in strength near Epinal, a solid line was established extending to the Swiss frontier. Progress in the next three months was slow and fighting bitter, as opposition stiffened. Nevertheless, Allied Forces continued their advance to the Siegfried Line and westward to the Rhine River where our troops held the west bank except for an area between Strasbourg and Mulhouse known as the "Colmar Pocket."

The enemy launched his final major counteroffensive of the war on 16 December 1944. Officially designated the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign, it was popularly known as the "Battle of the Bulge." The U.S. Third Army to the north moved quickly to counter the threat. This required the 6th Army group in the south, consisting of the U.S. Seventh and the French First Armies, to extend its lines northward to cover a much longer front. Against this line, the enemy launched the second half of his planned counteroffensive on New Year's eve by driving for the Saverne Gap in the Vosges Mountains and following with an attack across the Rhine and an offensive from the Colmar Pocket toward Strasbourg. After furious struggles in bitterly cold weather, all of these attacks were halted. quickly, the American and French troops joined forces to eliminate the enemy army in the Colmar Pocket; their mission was successfully completed by 9 February 1945. The U.S. Seventh Army thereupon undertook a progressive assault against the Siegfried Line to the north, while the U.S. Third Army continued to assault the Line and the enemy's flank and rear. Soon, the Siegfried Line was broken and the remaining enemy units cleared from the west bank of the Rhine.

The final offensive of the U.S. Seventh Army began in late March when it crossed the Rhine near Worms and seized Mannheim. Promptly, the French First Army crossed behind it and took Karlsruhe. Preseded by aircraft that constantly harassed and demoralized the enemy, Allied Forces swept throughout Germany. As the French captured Stuttgart and cut off escape into Switzerland, the U.S. Seventh Army fought through Nurnberg, took Munich, then drove through the Brenner Pass for its historic meeting with U.S. Fifth Army on 4 May 1945 at Vipiteno, Italy.

SITE

The Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial, 48 acres in extent, is situated on a plateau in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains, 100 feet above and overlooking the Moselle River. It is one of fourteen permanent World War II American military cemeteries erected on foreign soil by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The site was liberated on 21 September 1944 by the U.S. 45th Infantry Division and a temporary military burial ground was established there fifteen days later. Subsequently, the burial ground was selected to be a permanent cemetery site. After the war, when the temporary burial grounds were being disestablished by the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS), the remains of American military Dead whose next of kin directed permanent

interment on foreign soil were moved by the AGRS to a permanent site, usually the one closest to the temporary burial location. They were then interred by the AGRS in the distinctive grave patterns proposed by the cemetery's architect and approved by the Commission. Free use of the Epinal site as a permanent American military cemetery was granted by the French government in perpetuity without charge or taxation. Included in the site is a right of way approximately 500 meters in length leading from Highway D-157 to the main gate of the cemetery. The 5,255 American military Dead buried in the Epinal American Cemetery lost their lives in the fighting across central France, the Rhone Valley, the Vosges Mountains, the Rhine Valley and Germany, they represent 42% of the original burials in the region.

Design and construction of all facilities at the permanent American military cemeteries on foreign soil were the responsibility of the American Battle Monuments Commission, i.e., the memorial, the chapel, the visitors' building superintendent's quarters, paths, roads, walls and service facilities. It was also responsible for the sculpture, landscaping and other improvements on the site. Construction of the permanent cemetery at Epinal was completed in the spring of 1956 and the cemetery and its memorial were dedicated on 23 July 1956.

On the morning of 12 May 1958, 13 caskets draped with American flags were placed side by side under a canopy at the north end of the memorial in the cemetery. Each casket contained the remains of one Unknown serviceman from each of the thirteen permanent American military cemeteries established in the Atlantic Theatres of World War II. As soon as the caskets were in place, an honor guard took a position at attention about the canopy. When the invited dignitaries had arrived, General Edward J. O'Neill, Commanding General of the United States Army Communications Zone, Europe, walked slowly as past the thirteen caskets, returned to the front of the canopy, picked up a wreath and proceeded to the fifth casket from the east and placed the wreath upon it. He then drew himself to attention and saluted as taps were played. The simple ceremony of selection terminated with the band playing "Miserere", as the pall bearers carried the Unknown selected by General O'Neill behind an honor guard to a waiting hearse. The hearse, under escort, proceeded to Toul-Rosiers Air Base in France where the Unknown was flown to Naples, Italy and loaded aboard the destroyer *USS Blandy*. As soon as loading departed Naples to rendezvous in the Atlantic with a U.S. Naval Task Force carrying two other Unknowns, one from the Pacific Theatre of World War II and one from the Korean War. A similar ceremony to the one held at the Epinal American Cemetery was conducted by the Commander of the Naval Task Force to determine which of World War II Unknowns would represent both the Atlantic and Pacific Theatres of that war. After the selection was made, the Task Force proceeded to Washington, D.C. where, on Memorial Day 1958, the World War II and the Korean War Unknowns joined the Unknown soldier of World War I at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

ARCHITECTS

Architects for the cemetery memorial were Delano and Aldrick of New York City, New York. The landscape architect was Homer L. Fry of Austin, Texas.

GENERAL LAYOUT

Six kilometers southeast of Epinal, a winding road, 0.5 kilometers in length, leads from the south side of Highway D-157 to the main gate of the cemetery. Marking entry to the road on the right is a rectangular stone on which is carved the U.S. Great Seal above the words "Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial." Marking entry to the road on the left is a low curved wall on which the name of the cemetery also is carved.

About 90 meters inside the main gate, a crossing road leads north (left) to the superintendent's quarters and south (right) to the assistant superintendent's quarters and the service area. The Visitors' Building is about 300 meters inside the main gate on the south (right) side of the entry road where the road forms an elliptical drive. visitor parking is available just before and beyond the elliptical drive. A stone pathway leads northward from the Visitors' Building across the drive to the court under a single roof are the museum and chapel. Enclosing the court are low walls engraved with the names of the Missing in Action in the region. The Court of Honor sits at the south end of a wide grassy mall which is flanked by trees and separates the graves area into two plots. A 75-foot flagpole stands at the opposite (north) end of the grassy mall. Located in the northeast and northwest portions of the graves area are small circular cul-de-sacs with benches and fountains. Like the Court of Honor, the graves area is enclosed by a stone wall.

COURT OF HONOR

The Court of Honor is rectangular in shape. It is enclosed by low walls of Rocheret, a hard limestone from the Jura Mountains of eastern France. On these walls are engraved the names of 424 service members who are Missing in Action in the region:

United States Army and Army Air Forces.....	419
United States Navy.....	5

These Missing lost their lives in the service of their country, but their remains were not recovered, or if recovered, not identified. They represent every State of the Union (and the District of Columbia) except Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wyoming. The following inscriptions appear in English and French on the walls above their names:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF
AMERICANS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY AND
WHO SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES.

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
THOSE WHO DIED IN WORLD WAR II

**

1941-1945.

THIS IS THEIR MEMORIAL
THE WHOLE EARTH THEIR SEPULCHRE.

Without confirmed information to the contrary, a War Department Administrative Review Board established the official date of death of those commemorated on the Tablets of the Missing as one year and a day from the date on which the individual was placed in Missing in Action status.

MEMORIAL STRUCTURE

A rectangular memorial, consisting of a chapel on the east end and a museum room on the West End separated by an open but covered portico, stands in the center of the court. The overall structure is 81 feet long, 35 feet wide and 36 feet high. The walls of the structure like those enclosing the court are of Rocheret limestone. The floor of the portico is patterned with Rocheret and Roc Argente another French limestone from the Jura region.

EXTERIOR

The south face of the memorial contains two large bas-relief carvings designed and sculpted by Malvina Hoffman of New York. The carving on the western end of the south face depicts the Crusade in Europe. It is a composition of United States military forces advancing on the enemy and consists of infantry, tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft guns, paratroopers, grenade throwers, signalmen and search lights with a large eagle overhead to symbolize U.S. Army Air Forces. The carving on the eastern end of the south face depicts Survival of the Spirit. In the center of the carving, a kneeling figure of a sorrowing woman – humanity – comforts a dying soldier, while the souls of two brave young men who have preceded him in death are raised upward on rays of light by an angel, as their earthly bodies remain behind under a Latin Cross or Star of David headstone. In the upper left portion of the carving, an angel precedes them with a torch to light their way and in the upper right portion, two angels with trumpets herald their approach. Carved on the attic above the south face of the memorial are an eagle, also the work of Miss Hoffman, and the following inscription Exodus XIX:4:

I BARE YOU ON EAGLE WINGS
AND BROUGHT YOU UNTO MYSELF.

The frieze of the memorial bears the following inscriptions:
(south face) CITIZENS OF EVERY CALLING BRED IN THE PRINCIPLES OF THE
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY ** (east face) DEFENDERS OF THE CHALLENGED
FREEDOMS ** (north face) FROM NORMANDY AND PROVENCE – TO
ARDENNES LORRAINE AND ALSACE – BEYOND THE RHINE ** (west face)
CHAMPIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN **

On the north face of the memorial appears the following dedicatory inscription in English and French:

1942-1945

* *

IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE OF THE
ACHIEVEMENTS OF HER SONS AND
IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICES
THIS MEMORIAL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The eagle by Miss Hoffman that appears on the exterior attic wall above the south face also appears on the exterior attic wall above the north face, but without the inscription from Exodus.

INTERIOR

Within the portico and over the entrance to the chapel in the eastern portion of the memorial is a roundel in the center of which is the Lamb of God encircled by a Latin Cross, Tablets of Moses and a Star of David. Opposite it over the entrance to the museum to the west is a roundel on which appears the Great Seal of the United States. Both roundels were designed by Miss Hoffman. All carvings on the exterior and interior of the memorial were executed by Jean Juge of Paris.

INTERIOR -- CHAPEL

The chapel at the East End of the memorial is entered from the portico through oakwood doors inset with rectangular panes of glass. Directly in front of the entrance doors against the east wall of the chapel is a long teakwood planter. Above the planter are three tall narrow windows. The altar, flanked by circular teakwood planters, is an apse in the north wall of the chapel to the left of the entrance door. The altar and the two plinths on which it rests are Rouge Antique marble from southern France. On the wall above the altar is a large sculpture of the Angel of Peace designed by Miss Hoffman. Inscribed on the wall to the left of the Angel of Peace is: GIVE LIGHT TO THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS; inscribed on the wall to the right of the Angel of Peace is: AND GUIDE OUR FEET INTO THE WAY OF PEACE. These inscriptions are from St. Luke I:79.

Flanking the apse are two groups of flags. The group on the left consists of the U.S. Army flag of 1775, the U.S. flag and the U.S. Marine Corps flag. The group on the right consists of the U.S. Navy flag, the U.S. flag and the U.S. Air Force flag. A teakwood pew rests against the south wall of the chapel to the right of the entrance door. Carved in the front of the pew, from St. John X:28, is: I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH. Inscribed in the wall above the pew is: TAKE UNTO THYSELF O LORD THE SOULS OF THE VALOROUS THAT THEY MAY DWELL IN GLORY. Two roundels flank this inscription. The one on the left or to the east is of a Latin Cross; the one on the right is of the Tablets of Moses surmounted by a Star of David. The walls of the chapel are of Savonniere French limestone and the floor of Comblanchien, another durable French limestone from the Jura region. The ceiling is of teakwood. Suspended from the ceiling is a large hexagonal lamp of antique design with frosted glass panels.

INTERIOR -- MUSEUM

The primary feature of the museum room in the western portion of the memorial is the large colored glass mosaic map depicting American and Allied military operations from the landing in southern France on 15 August 1944 to the junction with Allied Forces advancing from Normandy on 11 September at Sombernon, near Dijon; and their subsequent advances after turning eastward, crossing the Rhine and sweeping across Germany to meet with the spearhead of the U.S. Fifth Army south of the Brenner Pass. The mosaic, 54 feet long and 14 feet high, was designed and fabricated by Eugene Savage of Branford, Connecticut, utilizing data provided by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The map is laid out in perspective as seen from the south; consequently, the lines of the longitude and latitude are tilted to accommodate the map to the proportions of the room. Thus, north is toward the upper right instead of vertically upward. Symbolically, the figures on the semi-circular wall depict the Spirit of Columbia leading the Army, Navy, and Air Forces to the landings on the south coast of France. The final victory is symbolized by the Angel of Victory with laurel branch above the central altar; a group composed of trumpets; the American and French flags emerging from the clouds of war and the outstretched hands of women who offer flowers as tribute to the victors.

In the border of the map are the insignia of the following military units of division size or larger that participated in ground operations in the region: 6th Army Group and 12th Army Group; third Army and Seventh Army; VI Corps, XV Corps, and XXI Corps; 3rd, 4th, 28th, 35th, 36th, 42nd, 44th, 45th, 63rd, 65th, 70th, 71st, 75th, 79th, 80th, 86th, 87th, 90th, 94th, 100th and 103rd Infantry Divisions; 6th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 20th Armored Divisions; and the 101st Airborne Division.

The principal Allied ground, naval and air forces that were engaged in these operations are listed in panels at the ends of the mosaic. On the straight wall adjacent to the south end of the map is a description in English, beneath the torch of Liberty, of these operations:

ON 15 AUGUST 1944 THE ALLIED FORCES LAUNCHED THEIR CAMPAIGN TO ASSIST THE NORMANDY OPERATION AND TO LIBERATE SOUTHERN FRANCE. AN OVERWHELMING AIR EFFORT FORMED THE PRELUDE. PRECEDED BY ALLIED ASSAULT GROUPS AND AIRBORNE TROOPS, THE VI CORPS OF THE U.S. SEVENTH ARMY STORMED ASHORE UNDER COVER OF INTENSE BOMBARDMENT BY THE WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE. THE U.S. 3RD, 36TH, AND 45TH INFANTRY DIVISIONS PROMPTLY BROKE THROUGH THE STEEL AND CONCRETE BEACH FORTIFICATIONS, SUBDUED THE DEFENDERS, AND SURGED INLAND.

SWIFTLY PURSUING THE DISINTEGRATING ENEMY UNITS UP THE RHONE VALLEY THE U.S. SEVENTH ARMY FREED LYON WHILE THE FRENCH FIRST ARMY REOCCUPIED MARSEILLE AND TOULON IN LESS THAN ONE MONTH THE ALLIES PUSHED 400 MILES TO JOIN HANDS AT SOMBERNON WITH THE FORCES ADVANCING FROM NORMANDY. BY 21 SEPTEMBER, NEAR EPINAL, THE TROOPS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN,

NOW ORGANIZED AS THE 6TH ARMY GROUP, HAD FORGED WITH THE U.S. THIRD ARMY OF THE 12TH ARMY GROUP A SOLID FRONT WHICH ISOLATED ALL GERMAN UNITS REMAINING IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE.

DURING OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER THE ADVANCE CONTINUED AGAINST PERSISTENT AND DESPERATE OPPOSITION REACHING THE RHINE AT STRASBOURG AND MULHOUSE; BETWEEN THESE CITIES THE ENEMY CLUNG TO AN AREA ABOUT COLMAR. ON 16 DECEMBER, IN THE ARDENNES, FARTHER TO THE NORTH, THE ENEMY LOOSED HIS LAST GREAT COUNTEROFFENSIVE OF THE WAR. THE U.S. THIRD ARMY MOVED INSTANTLY TO MEET THE THREAT, LEAVING THE 6TH ARMY GROUP TO DEFEND THE ENTIRE FRONT FROM SAARBRUCKEN SOUTHWARD. ON NEW YEAR'S EVE THE GERMANS ATTACKED FROM BITCHE TOWARD SAVERNE, THEN FOLLOWED EITH ONE THRUST ACROSS THE RHINE NORTH OF STRASBOURG AND ANOTHER FROM THE COLMAR POCKET. AFTER A FURIOUS STRUGGLE IN BETTERLY COLD WEATHER THE ATTACKERS WERE REPULSED. RESUMING ITS INTIATIVE THE 6TH ARMY GROUP OVERRAN THE COLMAR POCKET EARLY IN FEBRUARY AFTER THREE WEEKS OF SUSTAINED COMBAT IN WHICH THE GERMAN NINETEENTH ARMY WAS ANNIHILATED AS A FIGHTING FORCE.

U.S. NAVAL FORCES TOGETHER WITH THE ALLIED NAVIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PLAYED A VITAL ROLE BY SAFEGUARDING A CONTINUOUS FLOW OF TROOPS AND SUPPLIES AGAINST PERSISTENT SUBMARINE AND AIR ATTACKS. ALLIED AIR FORCES GAVE THE GROUND ARMIES INDISPENSABLE ASSISTANCE PRIOR TO AND THROUGHOUT THE OPERATIONS. THE U.S. FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE PERFORMED MAGNIFICENTLY DURING CONSISTENTLY BAD WINTER WEATHER WHEN THE ALLIED ARMIED LAUNCHED THEIR FINAL ATTACK THE EFFECT OF THE STRATEGIC AIR BOMBARDMENT OF GERMANY WAS TO BE REFLECTED IN THE RAPID DESTRUCTION OF HER FIGHTING FORCES.

THE FINAL OFFENSIVE BEGAN IN MARCH PACED BY THE U.S. NINTH AIR FORCE AND THE FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE, WHOSE ATTACKS DISRUPTED COMMUNICATIONS AND DESTROYED GERMAN TROOPS AND SUPPLIES, THE U.S. THIRD AND SEVENTH ARMIES CROSSED THE RHINE AND SWEEPED ACROSS GERMANY. WHILE THE FRENCH FIRST ARMY CUT OFF THE ENEMY'S AVENUES OF ESCAPE INTO SWITZERLAND, THE U.S. SEVENTH ARMY CAPTURED NURNBERG, SWUNG SOUTHWARD TO MUNICH AND SEIZED THE BRENNER PASS. ITS JUNCTION 4 MAY WITH THE U.S. FIFTH ARMY AT VIPITENO IN ITALY MARKED THE COMPLETE DEFEAT OF THE NAZI FORCES IN THIS MOUNTAIN REGION.

THE UNITY OF PURPOSE WHICH INSPIRED ALL WHO SHARED IN THESE CAMPAIGNS WAS A DECISIVE FACTOR IN THEIR SUCCESS. THEIR COURAGE AND THEIR DEVOTION TO DUTY WERE UNSURPASSABLE.

At the opposite end of the room is the French version of this inscription. Beneath these inscriptions are two sets of key maps: "The War Against Germany" and "The War Against Japan."

The plinth below the map is of Verte des Alpes and Italian green veined marble. the floor is paved with Comblanchien limestone.

GRAVES AREA

Interred in the cemetery are 5,255 American military Dead of World War II. Their 5,255 graves are set in two fanshaped plots separated by a wide north/south mall lined with sycamore (*Platanus orientalis*) trees. Plot A lies west of the mall, plot B to the east. The War Dead interred here died in the service of their Country. They came from every State of the Union, the District of Columbia and the then U.S. territories of Alaska and Hawaii. One buried here came from Canada and another from the British West Indies. One grave holds the remains of three identified Dead that could not be separately identified. In 14 instances, two brothers lie side by side. Sixty-nine graves hold the remains of American Dead that could not be identified (Unknowns). One of these graves contains the remains of two comrades in arms.

Each grave is marked by a white marble headstone; a Star of David for those of the Jewish faith, and a Latin Cross for all others. The lines of white headstones against the background of green grass harmonize well with the memorial and the Court of Honor at the south end of the mall. A 75-foot flagpole overlooks the graves area from the north end of the mall. Its circular bronze base sits on a pedestal of Rocheret limestone which in turn rests on two circular plinths of Ampilly limestone from the Cote d'Or region. The base plinth contains a thirteen points star of Noir d'Izeste from the Pyrenees. Two small cul-de-sacs with fountains are located in the graves area, one in the northeast corner and one in the northwest corner. The graves area itself is enclosed by a wall of granite from the local region with a coping of Euville limestone from the Verdun region.

PLANTINGS

The paths near the perimeter wall of the graves area afford magnificent view of the Moselle Valley and its wooded slopes. Immediately to the south of the cemetery, on the hillside, is a beautiful natural woodland of oak, spruce and beech. Within the cemetery itself are several groups of English beech (*Fagus sylvatica*); sycamores (planetrees – *Platanus orientalis*) line the paths of the cemetery. Oriental cherry (*Cerasus serulata*), red bud (*Cercis canadensis*) and English hawthorne (*Crataegus oxycantha*) were planted in the edges of the woods adjacent to the flagpole to add color and density. Flanking the Memorial on the north side are two Cedars of Lebanon as well as a large massif of shrubbery. In the entrance court of the cemetery are holly hedges (*Ilex aquifolium*) and in the Court of Honor are box hedges (*Buxus sempervirens*) and Polyantha and Red Glove roses. Informal massifs of other plantings in the vicinity of the Court of Honor contain barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), flowering quince (*Cydonis japonica*), rhododendrons, azaleas, forsythias, scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), cotoneaster and dwarf yew.